R E P O R T

ON

NUTRITION AND THE CONSUMER

TO: CONSUMER AFFAIRS BUREAU,
CONSUMER & CORPORATE AFFAIRS,
OTTAWA .

E. Houzer.
Toronto,
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REPORT ON NUTRITION AND THE CONSUMER

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I. INTRODUCTION

Nutrition has increasingly become a major concern in Canada; to governments, to health professionals, to the food industry and to the consumer. To some it represents millions of dollars in health care. To others it epitomizes the manipulation of the consumer by big business or a bigger slice of the food dollar. To the eating public nutrition is a mass of conflicting opinions and pronouncements, diet books and newspaper columns, government warnings and cereal ads. At recent hearings of the U.S. House of Representatives Sub-Committee on Domestic Marketing, Consumer Relations and Nutrition, one of the prime concerns expressed by the consumer was the lack of a highly visible, objective, source of dietary guidance.

What are the nutritional problems in Canada? Canadians, according to nutritionists, do not eat a well balanced nutritionally sound diet. Scientists and Committees of experts are still debating the nutritional values of specific foods, what constitutes a balanced diet and the exact relationship of diet to disease. They do agree however that apart from some age, sex and ethnic groups, the Canadian consumer is not suffering from any nutritional deficiency. In fact, most Canadians have a daily nutrient intake above the recommended allowance. Excess,not deficiency is the nutritional pattern.

Generally, Canadians consume too many calories for energy expended and specifically, they consume excessive amounts of fat, sugar and salt. There is an overwelming weight of medical and scientific evidence to link this with cardiovascular disease (the leading cause of death), hypertension, diabetes, arthritis and of course obesity. Combined with smoking and lack of exercise, the links become even closer. There is therefore a major nutritional problem in Canada and according to the medical/scientific community it is serious. (See Health and Welfare Report on Diet and Cardiovascular Disease)

Dr. A. Morrison, Assistant Deputy Minister, Health and Welfare Canada, Dr. Fraser Mustard, Dean of School of Medicine, MacMaster University, Dr. Zak Sabry, nutrition consultant and Dr. George Graham, Professor of Nutrition at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine agreed that this was the single most important diet-related problem in Canada. By solving this problem they feel we would be solving the nutritional problems of the majority of Canadians.

Therefore it is recommended that the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs assume all the responsibility within their mandate to both ensure that Canadians are aware of diet related disease, and that the market place offers them sufficient information so that they can make wise and healthy choices of food products.

The objectives of any program in this area are relatively simple: an effective information/education campaign and a market place with clearly labelled food readily available to all.

However no really successful action can be undertaken without the commitment of the Federal Government to the premise that there is a serious nutritional problem in Canada. All food policy must be considered in the light of nutritional needs as well as the needs of agriculture. Without this general commitment the programs of individual departments cannot have any significant effect.

II. NUTRITION POLICY

Nutrition policy at the government level cannot be separated from Food Policy. The Canadian Government has published a Food Strategy under the sponsorship of Agriculture Canada and CCA. However, there are problems of conflicting interests between Agriculture Health & Welfare and CCA in the food sector. Since Health & Welfare was not involved as a co-sponsor of the Strategy and since nutrition has been traditionally considered as a health matter, there is neither a high priority or strong emphasis given to nutrition in the Strategy.

In the Work Program drawn up by PCO to implement the strategy Health & Welfare has been assigned certain areas of activity and has undertaken the initiation of specific actions relating to nutrition. (See attached). In order for CCA to effectively fulfill their mandate in this area, they must work primarily with Health & Welfare and secondarily with Agriculture.

In the U.S., the Department of Agriculture has announced a new 15 million dollar grant program to support basic research related to food production and human nutrition.

President Carter has ordered a major re-organization study of federal food and nutritional activities noting that "the Federal Government is unable to respond as effectively as it should to the important changes taking place in the production, processing and marketing of food".

President Carter went on to say that as a result "our capability to develop and implement a coherent food and nutrition policy is severely hampered." The study is to pay special attention to practices in inspecting, grading and labelling food products as well as federal food and nutrition research.

III. THE MARKET PLACE

In order that the market place contain relevent information, all regulations governing food control, food labelling and food advertising must be re-examined.

Dr. George Graham, Professor of Nutrition at John Hopkins University, says that the recommended daily caloric intake and recommended daily allowance of nutrients (RDA) is much too high in the U.S.A and in Canada. He feels that before there can be any changes made in nutrient content and food labelling, these standards must be examined and lowered in the light of today's life style and eating habits. This opinion is shared by the FDA and the staff of the House Sub-Committee.

CONTENT

It has been suggested by nutritionists, advocated by consumer activists and is under consideration as a recommendation by the House Sub-Committee and FDA that: regulations governing the amount of fat, sugar and salt in processed foods be changed so that the maximum allowable amount will be substantially lowered.

Some of the scientists and physicians have recommended a re-examination of the amounts of nutrients added to foods. Scientific findings have suggested that foods with a high quantity of vitamin fortification can become toxic if consumed in large amounts, especially by young children. USDA is at present investigating this question in relation to vitamin fortified breakfast cereals.

Standards which relate to size and physical appearance of food are often understood by the consumer to be an indication of the nutritional value of the food. No concrete suggestions have been made as to how this terminology could be changed to become more relevant to nutrition, only that changes should be considered.

Regulations regarding product modification should also be examined within the light of nutritional requirements, e.g., meal substitutes, vegetable proteins, etc.

LABELLING

According to the F.D.A. and the House Sub-Committee, studies have shown that the nutritional labelling presently used in the U.S. is a complete failure. It is incomprehensible to the average consumer and in fact bears no relevancy to the major nutritional problems.

The Market Place (Continued)
Labelling

Caloric labelling, i.e. total caloric content and caloric value of an average serving has been suggested as being the most valuable for nutrition.

The F.D.A. will launch cross-country hearings on food labelling in January. They will attempt to discover what information the consumer wishes to have on food labels and feel strongly that caloric labelling will be the most common request.

The House Sub-Committee plans to recommend caloric labelling and The Centre for Science in the Public Interests is strongly advocating this labelling on all foods as well. Dr. Graham, suggests that this is the single most important piece of information for consumers.

The Center for Science in the Public Interests is also advocating "Health Hazard" labelling for foods with salt and for salt itself. Though this is an extreme position, labelling of the percentage of fat, sugar and salt has been suggested by many of the nutritionists. Depending on their individual bias, they stressed one or the other of three guilty nutrients. Both salt-free and sugar-free products are on the market and there is an indication that the industry is ready to consider expanding the number of these products.

The food industry has of course a large stake in nutritional labelling. They feel that market pressures are sufficient to guarantee adequate labelling without government interference. They are also most concerned with the confusion existing around the use of "calorie" "energy" and "kilajoual". Before any re-labelling of foods is undertaken, adequate market research must be done and this serious confusion resolved.

ADVERTISING

Regulations governing food advertising must become more relevant to nutritional needs. For example, a product cannot be advertised as "low calorie" unless it contains less than 50% of the calories in a normal product. Therefore beer, with 25% less calories, cannot be called low calory though in fact the information is extremely important to the consumer.

Advertising of high sugar content products, and snack foods, especially designed for children, seems to be the major concern of government agencies and consumer groups in the U. S.

The Market Place (Continued)
Advertising

Beginning in January, 1978, the House Sub-Committee intends to call on all major food processors and network representatives to hearings regarding advertising of food. They will be asked:

- How much of their food advertising budget is used to convey substantive nutrition information?
- How much of their advertising budget, both in money and time, is spent on T.V. food advertisement seen by children?
- Which of their products contain more than 40 percent total sugar and how much time and money is spent on advertising their products?
- What research has been done on affect on the eating patterns and nutritional intake of their viewers?
- How in conscience they can allow such a high density of self-serving food industry advertising on the networks without some balancing advocacy for commodities such as fresh foods and vegetables?

Proposals have already been made to the U.S. Congress to levy a tax on food advertising and to use that revenue for mass media nutrition education.

The industry claims that food advertising does not increase primary consumption, only secondary and therefore they bear none of the responsibility for over-consumption. However, even if secondary consumption is increased of a nutritionally questionable product, e.g., high sugar content, then advertising does play a key role. For example, the Ontario Milk Marketing Board's "Wear a Mustache" TV campaign has successfully increased the consumption of milk, even if it has not increased the total consumption of beverages. Some nutritionists consider over-consumption of milk a health hazard. By extension, snacking cake advertisements cannot only increase its share of the snack food market, but it can also diminish the share of fresh fruits.

Dr. Trowbridge, nutritional epidemiologist, at Johns Hopkins, formerly with Center for Disease Control, feels that the government should regulate all advertising of products which promote the over-consumption of certain nutrients, e.g., fat, sugar and salt. He also said that these regulations should extend to food advertising that implies in any way "that more is better".

IV. EDUCATION/INFORMATION/RESEARCH

Teaching people how and what to eat or influencing them to change their diet patterns and eating habits is a most difficult and complex task. It is further complicated by the fact that the consumer now eats more than 30% of daily calorie intake outside meal hours. The target audience is therefore much larger than before and focal points much more diffused.

Nutrition education and consumer nutrition information overlap and in some instances are impossible to distinguish. Academically, nutrition education is usually considered material geared for the school system and used by professionals while consumer information is chanelled through mass media to the general public. While there is a lack of adequate research in both fields, more work has been done in nutrition education than in information.

In Canada, nutrition education is within the mandate of Health and Welfare, Provincial Ministries of Health and Education and Local Health Departments and Boards of Education. C.C.A. must lend active support to activities in this field especially when nutrition education is combined with consumer education as has been recommended in the U.S.

Specifically, C.C.A. has a vital role to play in the research of consumer attitudes and buying patterns and, most importantly, on the impact of information on these attitudes and patterns.

Increasing the budget for education and information does not increase effectiveness and it is in this area, the impact of information, that existing research is so inadequate. The importance of this research has been stressed over and over again. At the Federal Government level, both Health and Welfare and Agriculture have expressed great interest in co-operative research projects. The Ontario Council of Health has made nutrition education and information a high priority activity, especially studies on the impact of information. They are interested in establishing contact with C.C.A. with a view to co-operative research. (See appended note on Ontario Council of Health) The Mustard Report on Diet and Cardiovascular Disease includes in the recommendations for government action: encouragement and support for (i) research on the relationship of nutrition, environment, and life-style factors to cardiovascular disease, and (ii) research directed at the most effective methods for dispersing essential knowledge to all citizens.

Education/Information/Research (Continued)

In the United States, the Department of Agriculture, H.E.W., and the National Institutes of Health have recently undertaken a total re-examination of all nutrition education in the light of very critical testimony before the House Committee.

Present nutrition education is considered inadequate, even though extensive research has been done on all aspects of health education, including evaluation. (See appended documents on Health Education from Johns Hopkins University)

A recent article in The Journal of Consumer Research says that survey data consistently finds that the majority of consumers say they want and are willing to pay for nutrition information but suggests that most consumers neither acquire such information when making a purchase decision nor comprehend most nutrition information once they receive it.

Less work has been done on the impact of information directed to the general public by the mass media. The industry insists that they cannot change behaviour patterns and that motivational research and qualitative analysis of information material is so difficult as to be almost impossible. They further claim that they have no relative data though the staff of the House Sub-Committee felt that this data did exist at advertising agencies and market surveyors. The industry continues to use the Primary vs. the Secondary consumption argument as proof. It has been suggested that industry advertising campaigns are successful only when they are in tune with life-style trends, e.g., convenience foods, or if they are marketing something that does taste good, e.g., it is easier to sell Coca-Cola than cod liver oil.

Some research material on mass media and health education does exist. The Children's Television Workshop (Producers of Sesame Street) produced and aired a series of prime time television programmes called "Feeling Good". The series was not considered an overwhelming success according to David Connel, Vice-President of CTW even though they had a respectable rating for Public Television. He could not explain why they were not more successful. However, the Research Department of CTW has published a very thorough analysis of the programmes and of the response. This study would be most relevant to any research undertaken by C.C.A.

Education/Information/Research (Continued)

The Workshop is presently preparing a series of 48 second health commercials for consideration by NBC, and have submitted pilots. NBC will make a decision on the entire package of 50 before the end of the year. NBC plans to sell the commercials to corporations for institutional advertising. Since the CTW is both one of the most imaginative production houses in the U.S. and is a non-profit organization, it would be interesting to follow this project with a view to some kind of collaboration with CTW at a later date.

V. HIGH RISK OR VULNERABLE CONSUMERS

Although it has been agreed that most Canadians do not suffer from nutritional deficiencies, there are specific age, sex and ethnic groups who either have, or are suspected of having some nutritional deficiency. The iron deficiency,anemia, suggested by Nutrition Canada has been questioned by scientists, but calcium and vitamin deficiencies do exist, especially among the disadvantaged consumer.

In this area, co-operation with Health and Welfare is mandatory. Health and Welfare must delineate the high risk group as well as defining their exact nutritional problems. C.C.A. could then merchandise Health and Welfare's message, present food alternatives, and do buyer education in one unidirectional campaign designed for specific consumers.

However, telling people to eat certain nutrients is not realistic if foods containing those nutrients are not available or are priced out of reach. An examination of market and marketing conditions must be made before any programmes in this area are undertaken.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

On behalf of the consumer:

- Advocate Federal Government commitment to the nutritional consideration of all food policy;
- Examine all regulations governing the content, labelling and advertising of food;
- Seek to establish effective nutrition information in co-operation with other concerned government departments;
- Undertake in co-operation with other government departments both Federal and Provincial, universities and the industry research into the effectiveness of nutrition information on consumer eating habits and diet patterns;
- Suggest to the food industry that more consideration be given to Canada's nutritional problems in preparation, marketing, selling and advertising of food.

Specifically:

- Consider the whole question of caloric labelling; ingredient and percentage listings and special label information on fat, sugar and salt;
- Design research components for all consumer services projects so that effectiveness of information can be tested;
- Consider long term research projects on the impact of information in co-operation with Ontario Council of Health, MacMaster University, University of Toronto, University of Guelph, as well as with Health and Welfare and Agriculture;
- Discuss with the food industry questions of; limiting salt, fat and sugar in processed food; modifying commercials so as to stress good nutritional habits; changing merchandising techniques so as to encourage better shopping habits in supermarkets; active participation in nutrition education; caloric labelling of foods in both restaurants and groceries; etc.
- Examine the food labelling procedures in Holland, Sweden, Norway and Switzerland;

Recommendations (Continued)

- Examine the public information campaign on life styles launched by the Swedish Government and the results;

- Follow the FDA labelling hearings in the new year;

- Monitor the House of Representatives, Committee on Agriculture, Sub-Committee on Domestic Marketing, Consumer Relations, and Nutrition, hearings on food advertising;

- Consult with officials at USDA on the new concept of Nutrition Education;

- Follow the Children's Television Workshop's project on health commercials;

- Follow the Quebec Government programme on nutrition; and,

- Monitor Canadian television to determine the density of and quality of food commercials in general and food advertising directed at children in particular.

VI. DISCUSSIONS MEMORANDA

Dr. Ray Stokes

F.D.A.: HEW, Washington

Dr. Stokes is the Director of Consumers Studies in the Office of Nutrition and Consumer Science at FDA. Also attending the meeting was Dr. Schucker, Staff Adviser in Psychology. Dr. Stokes feels that all evidence in the U.S. points to one major nutritional problem - excess calories, salt, sugar and fat. He also pointed out however that there is no scientific evidence relating sugar per se to disease except dental caries.

Dr. Stokes explained that nutritional labelling in U.S. is voluntary except when the nutrients have been added to a product or any nutritional claims are made in advertising or on the label. However the industry is using nutritional labelling on many products voluntarily. This type of labelling is considered "a laundry list" and considered next to useless.

At present there is a survey underway to determine "information processing" on the part of the consumer, i.e., their capacity to deal with nutritional information. A second phase of the survey is planned to begin in January. This will consist of a series of hearings (already announced by Dr. Kennedy, Head of FDA) to be held across the United States on the question of food labelling. They expect to get input from consumers both individually and in groups. The underlying reason for the hearings is the FDA's feeling that the nutritional information available is too difficult to assimilate and that less information should be delivered more simply. They will ask the questions -"What information?" "How much information?"and,"In what form?". They will also test reactions to logo or graphic labelling. FDA is anticipating a very strong demand for an increased emphasis on caloric labelling by consumers and this is under active investigation. It will be extremely useful to monitor these hearings.

Dr. Stokes explained that in the U.S.,consumer groups have locked into the position of demanding all nutritional information - "The Right to Know" and this is self-defeating. Too much information becomes useless information. The Consumers Service Division feels that you can only change dietary behaviour by creating new needs and that a program of information and education must be compatible with labelling of food products. He feels that their nutrition education and public information have been very poorly done and poorly co-ordinated.

Nutrition, organizationally is part of both the White House and the Congress; General Accounts, Office of

Dr. Ray Stokes (Continued)

Technology and Assessment; Office of Science and Technology at the White House, HEW and USDA. Basically nutrition education is handled by USDA and they have, in the past, relied mainly on the school system as a medium.

Carol Foreman, Assistant Secretary of Agriculture has undertaken a complete overhaul of nutrition education and assigned Louise Light to work on an entirely new concept. (further is recommended). At NIH, nutrition education relating to dietary patterns and disease is geared to the professionals. Their material is also inadequate and is in the process of being overhauled.

N.B.: At the House Sub-Committee hearings very severe critisism was levelled at both USDA and NIH for the quality of their education and information material. Congressional Research Institute, at the request of the Sub-Committee prepared an analysis of all such material (See appended documents).

The F.D.A. itself is funding studies and private projects on both the impact of information and the integration of material in its school corridors. At Stanford University a program based on advertising campaigns and intervention is being tested in three cities in California. The campaign is designed to increase awareness of the relation between cardiovascular disease, overweight, smoking, cholestoral and exercise. The results so far of the Stanford studies are very positive but have not yet been evaluated. Dr. Stokes said that the study has shown that advertising was more effective than intervention (personal contact with control groups) and for that reason he was sceptical of the results and was personally going to Stanford for part of the evaluation process (recommend follow-up). The FDA is also funding studies in the school systems of Utah and Colarado on the use of nutritional labelling. The information was integrated into the existing curriculum and not introduced as a separate subject. These studies are now being evaluated, and results are expected in 2 or 3 months.

Dr. Stokes also mentioned that there has been a proposal made to Congress to: prohibit advertising of sugar snacks to children: another proposal was to levy a tax on food advertising and use that revenue for "media" nutritional messages.

Miss L. Hurst

Food Advisory Division,
Department of Agriculture/Ottawa

The activities of the Division are:

a) Education/information materials on ways of using Canadian food.

b) Food promotion: specific promotion because of market needs.

The education/information material is provided to the food systems: Provinces, food editors, institutions, food professionals, etc., etc. and not to the general public except on request. Since over 30% of the meals are eaten outside the home, they pay special attention to the hotel and restaurant industry. The Division prepares booklets on food topics and on general promotional materials to push one particular food and press releases in topical items. Miss Hurst was interested in co-operating with CCA in research on the impact of information, informatable materials and informative campaigns.

Dr. Charles Hollenberg

Jean King

Nutrition Study Group
University of Toronto

Jean King is a Nutritionist and Executive Secretary of the Study Group.

Dr. Charles Hollenberg is the Chief of Staff of Toronto General Hospital and Chairman of the Department of Medicine at the University of Toronto Medical School.

The multi-disciplinary Study Group on Human Nutrition has only been recently established at the University of Toronto. It includes academics from the entire University spectrum; Medical Curriculum, Sociology,Bio-Chemistry, as well as teams working with specific diseases, e.g., diabetes, arthritis. The Study Group as a whole will co-ordinate and monitor individual research projects and act as a single voice in questions relating to nutrition.

They are not planning any related multinational or compliance research. Mrs. King expressed great interest in any input the Department could make in social research since she feels they lack this expertise.

The project is well funded and seems to have high priority at the University of Toronto.

Michael Jacobson

Nutrition,
Center for Science in the Public Interest, Wash.

The CSPI is a very active consumers advocacy group that participates in every relevant hearing in Washington.

Jacobson himself is a micro-biologist turned militant consumer advocate. Though he has a rather "faddy" approach to nutrition (health foods, etc.) he is considered a formidable critic of the food industry, and as such is used by Legislative Committees. He feels that all nutritional problems should be resolved through education and regulation and stresses the use of mass media. The CSPI is focussing their attack on sugar in snack foods and cereals as well as the high sodium content of processed food. He also feels that governments have more credibility in disseminating nutrition information than any other sector. Some of these CSPY's recommendations for government and industry action are:

1. Ban the advertising (FTC) of sugar cereals to children;

2. Sensitise the public to the connection between sugar and tooth decay;

3. Restrict amount of sodium in processed foods (FDA);

4. Restrict the amount of fat in processed foods;

5. List sodium, fat and sugar content on all food labels;

6. Standardize the way sugar is listed on labels, e.g., percentage of the product that is sugar;

7. Put hazard warning on products with a high salt content and on salt itself;

8. Encourage the breeding of lean animals and the cultivation of sunflowers.

He claimed that industry would not suffer and used the examples of Campbell's Soup and Beechnut baby foods. Campbells is test marketing a new group of soups with blue rather than red labels prominently labelled "no salt" and suggesting consumers add salt to taste. Beechnut removed all salt from their baby foods and launched a massive advertising campaign announcing the change and stressing the fact that babies did not need salt. They succeeded in getting a larger share of the market. Other baby food

Michael Jacobson (Continued)

manufacturers followed suit. (See appended documents for the CSPI list of possible government action for the promotion of good nutrition and health)

Ontario Milk Marketing Board
Maitland Street, Toronto

Marg Metzler, Nutrition Educationalist

OMMB runs work shops mostly for teachers (occasionally paramedics) all over Ontario. These are based on work shops developed by the California Dairy Council. The work shops are 3 hours long, have 20-25 teachers participating, and scheduled only on request of a school board or a group of teachers. Each teacher attending gets the OMMB nutrition kit, an extremely well designed, expensive package of workbooks, posters, film strip, etc. There are two types of work shops, one designed for K-G3 and the other for G.4-6. At present the OMMB are testing a third one, geared for G.7 to 10 and possible adult use. This one stresses weight control and was started in 76/77. It emphasizes food selection, exercise and behaviour patterns. They have developed a method of evaluating the first two kits but are still working on the third and most difficult. The results will be interesting since this group is under peer pressure in its eating habits, and is much less under the influence of its teachers.

The OMMB feels that the work shops are extremely successful and use the evidence of their evaluation system. Students are checked on:

a) nutritional knowledge; and,

b) change in attitudes six months after the work shop.

They have evidence of substantial rise in nutritional knowledge and a noticeable change in attitudes. There is no long term follow-up.

Mrs. Metzler claims that milk is not stressed more than any of the other basic foods during the program. The program budget is high.

The kit is available in the Resource Centre of Consumer Services. See appended documents for a report on the program's evaluation system.

Ontario Milk Marketing Board (Continued)

Bonnie Lange,
Advertising

Bonnie Lange is Co-ordinator of the OMMB "Wear a Moustache" campaign on the televisions, created by Ogilvy and Mather. It has been on the air for almost two years with a 90 GRPS. The OMMB with the agency, has maintained careful tracking of the commercial with a sample of 3,500 Ontario teenagers. After careful market analysis and pre-testing, the target audience was carefully delineated as age 12 to 17. (Since overall cuppage is up they feel that there has been a large spill to younger children)

The results of their tracking show that 80% of the target group drank "a glass of milk yesterday" before the commercials. After two months of air time, 85% responded affirmatively. This is now up to 87% and at what they consider to be the cut-off point. 44% drank "3 or more glasses of milk yesterday" before the commercial. This went up to 48% after two months and is now at 55%. OMMB naturally thinks that the commercials have been extremely successful. They have tracked other beverages as well during this period but were unwilling to give me the figures. Therefore it is difficult to say whether they have increased primary consumption of beverages or just increased their share of the beverage market.

Miss Lang also told me of another program designed for an ethnic market. They launched a campaign using ethnic media and directed towards Italian males between 20 and 49 years of age. During the campaign they registered an increase of 52% to 62% of the sample group drinking milk. The campaign was handled by an Italian advertising agency in Toronto. Obviously any information campaigns directed towards ethnic groups and concerned with changing attitudes or shifting behaviour patterns should be handled, whenever possible, by ethnic agencies.

Mr. S.W. Martin

Chairman
Ontario Health Council
Bay Street, Toronto

The Ontario Health Council (advisory counsil to Minister of Health) has established a Task Force on health promotion in nutrition, considered one of their highest priorities. The objectives of the Task Force are:

1. To develop recommendations on how the Ministry of Health can more effectively promote good health through improved nutrition and eating habits and changing social attitudes toward food.

Mr. S.W. Martin (Continued)

2. To develop recommendations on the means by which the impact of the proposed programs might best be measured.

The Task Force has been instructed to emphasize: the development of recommendations for the most effective promotional or "persuasive" programs to meet the general objective; and those factors affecting nutrition which can be defined as arising from the prevailing "life styles" in Ontario.

Mr. Martin (former Deputy Minister of Health) expressed interest in any research models that C.C.A. might develop for testing the impact of information. He also expressed a great willingness to enter into a joint research with C.C.A. Since the Ontario Department of Health has many programs which deal directly with the consumers, the possibility of a joint research on information effectiveness with the Ontario Health Council should be considered.

Giant Food Chain:/U.S.

Giant and Jewell Food Chains have started nutrition merchandising. One large Giant supermarket in Baltimore featured a special meat counter devoted to "lean meat" in all cuts. The counter had about half of the total meat space and was decorated with large full color posters advertising the lean cuts.

A special rack, not very well displayed, contained a selection of Giant publications including:

- Consumers Guide to Seafood; to buy fresh and frozen fish...what to watch for...how to cook and serve...recipes...calorie and nutrient values...contamination information, etc.

- Consumers Guide to Meat; explanation of different cuts...nutritional values...cooking times... content of variety meats...lean meats...and additives.

- Consumers Guide to Poultry; explanation of labelling in general...nutrition guide...cooking and storing tips, etc.

- Bag it; a guide to packing nutritious lunches... contains an excellent chart of alternatives within the food groups and how to pack a well balanced lunch.

Giant Food Chain (Continued)

These food guides are part of a series of pamphlets on consumer questions published by Giant. They bear the logo "published by Giant as part of its commitment to the consumers' Right to be Informed".

Saga Foods

2368 Lakeshore
Oakville, Ontario
827-1600

Garry Knox, General Manager

Saga Foods is a Food Service Management Company that runs cafeterias and dining rooms in universities, hospitals and other institutional settings. They are the third largest in Canada and have installations at 24 Canadian universities. The parent company in the U.S. services most American universities. Because of the demand by some of their clients in the U.S., Saga has begun a nutrition awareness program. They supply their outlets with nutrition kits containing posters, pamphlets, etc. to be used during a specific period. The local managers attend nutrition seminars as well.

Saga has instituted a completely nutritional menu at Lewis and Clark University at the request of the University authorities and in response to demands by the students who were interested in health foods. (See appended documents for report and sample menu)

According to Knox this service is done within the established budget of the University and is not a problem for Saga. All their menus are prepared by dieticians in California, covering a 5wk. period; contain nutritional alternatives, and are based on computerised nutrient analysis of all recipes.

Knox said that the industry will respond to the demand of the consumer and can accommodate to any nutritional demands. Often it is the committee at the institution that does not ask for a better nutritional mix... but all industry will respond to pressure. He feels that managers of dining facilities, etc. are an important key since they influence eating habits through selection, display and alternatives offered.

Dr. Zak Sabry
Prof. University of Guelph
National Co-ordinator,
Nutrition Canada

Discussed with Dr. Sabry nutritional surveillance and specific nutritional problems in Canada, he feels strongly that the poor nutrition of Canadians is due to eating habits and not each of the proper foods. He said that the Nutritional Survey showed no nutritional deficiencies but rather, diet deficiencies. As an example he quotes the iron and calcium deficiency pointed out by the survey. (Note: Dr. George Graham, John Hopkins suggests that iron deficiency is not really a serious problem since only 10% of iron deficiency anaemia is diet related and there are many individual differences in requirements of iron.)

Dr. Sabry said that the nutrition survey data available in the computer at Health and Welfare can give us information on the intake level of specific foods such as eggs, oil and animal fat so that diet patterns of specific age, sex and ethnic groups could be identified. There are at present no funds available for the retrieval of this data.

He feels strongly that if dietary patterns and eating habits of Canadians can be changed to reduce the intake of fat, sugar and salt, the major nutritional problem of most Canadians will be solved.

Dr. Fraser Mustard
Dean, School of Medicine
MacMaster University
Hamilton, Ontario.

Chairman
Committee on Diet and Cardiovascular Disease
Health and Welfare

Dr. Mustard restated the importance of the relation between diet and cardiovascular disease and the urgency of changing eating habits.

He feels that information campaigns must be targeted to consumers in cafeterias, restaurants and fast food outlets as well as supermarkets. He thinks that logo labelling, i.e., the representation of the four food groups by a simple logo, would be an effective aid to the consumer in choosing a well balanced diet. He also believes fat, sugar and salt should be minimized in processed foods.

Dr. Fraser Mustard (Continued)

Dr. Mustard emphasised how little research has been done on the effectiveness of information and mentioned a compliance study being done at MacMaster with patients suffering from severehypertension. This study attempted to determine what factors would influence patients to take medication, i.e., comply with Doctors' instructions. So far, there have been no satisfactory results from the study. (Follow-up with Dr. David Sackett, MacMaster)

Dr. Mustard used the Swedish Government and their campaign to change life styles as an example of the kind of campaign that could and should be launched by the Canadian Government. Information on this campaign is available at the Nutrition Services Bureau, Health and Welfare, Research Division; Consumer Bureau has relevant address in Sweden for further information.

Retail Council of Canada
Toronto

Alasdair McKichan, President
Alistair Smith, Grocery Division

The role of supermarkets in the nutritional well-being of Canadians was discussed and it was pointed out that supermarkets, by their merchandising techniques, influence consumers' shopping patterns and therefore affect nutrition.

Mr. McKichan agreed that supermarkets could play a more active role in promoting good nutrition through in-store information and display, shelf space assignments, choice of loss leaders, weekly newspaper ads, etc., etc. He felt that the Retail Industry would be open to suggestions as to how they can improve their nutrition image - as long as it did not cost them anything. The Retail Council Grocery Division will be devoting a day of their annual May meetings to the problem of nutrition.

He also thought that supermarket chains would be interested in funding some public information on nutrition but only as individuals not as an industry, preferring to take credit individually. Perhaps this should be pursued with one of the food chains.

At a later meeting with Don Murphy, Mr. McKichan said that the retail grocers had decided to make next year "Nutrition Year" and would be concentrating heavily on nutrition. This does reflect the higher profit margin on diet products. The climate seems right for C.C.A. to use some "friendly pursuasion".

Maudene Nelson
Institute of Human Nutrition
(post grad; part of Health Sciences)
Columbia University, New York

Maudene Nelson is a young nutritionist typical of the new professionals in this field. She has very strong feelings of right and wrong about food and diet and does not seem to have reached the point of being able to put nutrition in a broader context. She feels that there are serious deficiencies among some groups in the U.S. and that they have not been properly documented. She teaches and is involved with projects in the lower Bronx and other disadvantaged communities, and it is in these communities she feels that there are problems of malnutrition among certain sectors. In these cases she advocates the actual delivery of the required food (glorified bread line) in the short term and massive education programmes for long term improvement. Her overall nutrition message for the general public is to "increase consumption of what grows out of the ground" in other words, "down with processed and manufactured food". Commendable perhaps but not very practical.

One study that is underway at the Institute on obesity and children is already showing interesting results. The social, familial, scholastic and eating patterns of obese children in grades 5 and 6 are being studied and given individual counselling and will be followed for five years. So far there have been strong indications that most of the children are the youngest in the family; generally much larger (taller and bigger bone structure) than average; and eat alone. They also either prepare their own meals or serve themselves, even if the food has been prepared in advance by their mothers.

It will be worth following this project to gain insight into some of the reasons for obesity, and if the behaviour modification attempts through counselling have helped.

Nelson suggested contacting Joan Gusso, head of the Nutrition, at the School of Education at Columbia and a well known nutrition educationalist. Gusso is also on the nutrition panel of Sesame Street.

David Connel
Vice-President
Childrens' Television Workshop
1 Lincoln Plaza,
New York.

Childrens' Television Workshop produces Sesame Street, Electric Company, etc. It is a non-profit organization with a large production staff and very active and highly qualified advisory boards. They experiment not only

David Connel (Continued)

with children's educational television but with adult programming as well. Most of their productions are carried by public television and are not meant to be commercial successes. Sesame Street however is an enormous commercial as well as educational success. CTW has a large and very professional communication research division. They have done many studies on the communication of cognitive information, including the impact of individual segments of Sesame Street. This division would be a valuable resource in planning info programmes, since nutrition is included in the curriculum of Sesame Street and in the contents of the Sesame Street Magazine.

In 1974/75 CTW produced an experimental series of adult health education programmes called "Feeling Good" and shown on public television. The first half of the series used a dramatized 'street' format with a neighbourhood drug store as the focal point and a 'family' of established characters. In each programme a variety of health topics were covered. The second half of the series was done in a straight documentary/interview approach on one topic, with Dick Cavitt as host. Connel felt that the programmes were not successful though the second format was better than the first,and in spite of the good ratings (for public television), he couldn't give any exact reasons.

A number of studies have been done on the series by the Workshop's research division as well as by independent research companies. All these studies would be valuable resource material for any nutrition information programme.

CTW is now involved in producing a series of "health commercials" as a pilot project for NBC. The idea for the commercials initiated with CTW who sold the idea to NBC. The pilot consists of three 48 second commercials now being considered by NBC for a possible series of 50. The network intends to sell them to corporations for institutional advertising. A decision was expected before the end of the year but because of the recent shake-up at NBC top management,it may well be delayed. The three pilots use three different target groups and three different techniques; children, adults, family; animated, dramatised with people,and dramatised with humans and puppets (Sesame Street characters for children).

Contact should be maintained with the Workshop for further information on this project and with a view to possible collaboration on information materials. The CBC produces a Canadian 15 minute insert into Sesame Street and maintains close liason with the Workshop. Any collaboration could be handled with the co-operation of CBC, Dan McCarthy, Supervisor, Sesame Street, CBC, 100 Carleton Street, Toronto.

Dr. D.A. Henderson; Dean
Dr. George Graham; Prof. of Nutrition
Dr. F. Trowbridge; Assistant Prof. Nutrition/Epidemeology
Dr. Larry Green; Prof. Health Education

School of Public Health,
Johns Hopkins University,
Baltimore Md.

Dr. D.A. Henderson

Dr. Henderson feels very strongly that the most important health problem in North America is overeating, lack of exercise, and not the consumption, or lack of consumption of any specific foods. The problem could be solved for the majority of Americans by cutting calories. He is also a strong believer in the mass media as an influencing factor in behaviour and thinks it should be used heavily in education, i.e., "cut calories...cut intake of fat, sugar and salt". He has little faith in the modifying influence of the educational system except through the re-education of professionals. He is interested in any information programmes that the Canadian Government may launch as well as any research projects that may be undertaken on the impact of information. Hopkins may well be willing to co-operate in any such research.

Dr. George Graham

Dr. Graham has just received the Borden Medal in Nutrition, awarded for the outstanding contribution to nutrition in the U.S.

He feels very strongly that there is a serious nutritional problem in the U.S. and it is the problem of overweight. Excessive intake of fats, sugar and salt are secondary problems. He points to the data collected on the feeding programs in the U.S. which show that in over ten years there has been no appreciable difference in the level of health among the recipients of the program.

According to Dr. Graham the recommended daily caloric intake and recommended daily allowance (RDA) of nutrients is far too high and in the case of some nutrients, positively dangerous. One survey by the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta showed that on the average most Americans consumed about 80% of the recommended calorie intake. Yet another, the Haines survey, by National Institutes of Health showed that most Americans were seriously overweight. Dr.

Dr. George Graham (Continued)

Graham says that the levels reflect a different time and different life style. Far more energy was expended in daily living twenty or thirty years ago than now, (the Canadian equivalent to RDA is the Dietary Standards set by Health and Welfare).

He dismissed iron deficiency anaemia as irrelevent to diet and said that less than 10% of this anaemia was diet related.

He feels that food regulations should be changed; that the amount of sugar allowed in processed food should be sharply limited; that advertising of food with high sugar content should be controlled and that the public should be educated to the danger of sugar, i.e., source of excess calories and therefore excess weight...Though he does not relate sugar to any particular disease, he feels that it is the commonest cause of overweight..regulations regarding food and meal substitutions should be re-examined to allow the consumer broader choices so that he can cut down calories; and he is a firm advocate of caloric labelling, including calories per serving. Recommended are simply:

1. reduce recommended daily caloric intake and recommended daily allowance (RDA);

2. make people calorie conscience;

3. establish sensible simple calorie level intakes;

4. label all foods with calorie content (in restaurants, as well);

5. teach people how to eat and combine foods so as to get more nutrition and less calories; and,

6. re-examine traditional concepts of eating which influence nutritional education and public attitudes to see which are in fact valid.

Dr. F. Trowbridge

Dr. Trowbridge was formerly an epidemeologist of the Centre of Disease Control, and was involved with a major ten state nutrition survey and the monitoring of recipients of the feeding program. He said that there were no indicators of clinical malnutrition or clinical nutrient deficiency. He echoed Dr. Graham's contention that the food

Dr. F. Trowbridge (Continued)

programs in the U.S. served only to make poor people fat and thus added to their problems and did nothing to relieve the basic social problems of the disadvantaged. Trowbridge recommended:

1. control of food advertising that implies "more is better" because with calorie intake, more is not better, more is dangerous;

2. "Hazard"labelling certain foods, high in fat, sugar and salt. These foods should carry risk warnings; and,

3. control advertising of those foods that promote over-intake of certain nutrients, e.g., sugar.

Dr. Larry Green

Dr. Green is a professional researcher and health educationalist in every way. He is considered somewhat of a guru among others in the field and is in constant demand as a witness at Congressional hearings; a keynote speaker at conventions and a major contributor to medical and educational conferences. He answers all requests for an opinion or judgment with a paper that he has written in very technical jargon (see appended documents for some related studies).

Dr. Green claims that research on information and highway accidents/family planning/ immunization/ and smoking would all be relevent to the preparation of information programs on nutrition (see appended publications list).

Canadian Grocery Products Manufacturers
110 Laurier Street West,
Ottawa, Ontario.

E. Steele, President
Terry Goodyear
Philip Moyes

I met with representatives of the industry at a meeting arranged by the Association. Both marketing and technical people were present. I explained that I did not represent the Department but was preparing a paper with recommendations for action to be taken by CCA with regard to nutrition and the consumer. Instead of discussing possible recommendations, I gave them a briefing in the activities of the U.S. Sub-Committee hearings and the probable action that would be taken in the U.S. Since the major food

Canadian Grocery Products Manufacturers (Continued)

industries in Canada are subsidiaries of American companies, the food's future in the U.S. is highly relevent to the Canadian scene. They were only slightly hostile and argued specific points with counter-information and statistics. In general, I got the distinct impression that they knew that some kind of changes were due in regulations concerning food content, labelling and advertising and that they were negotiating for a bigger role in determining those changes. Specifically:

1. The Canadian food industry feels very strongly that the less regulations the better. They believe that existing regulations inhibit the marketing of some nutritional foods and of low calorie, low fat foods. They feel that the industry would respond to consumer demands in this area and competition would assure the marketing of nutritional foods if restrictions were removed on advertising.

2. If changes in regulations are going to be made they ask that they be done in close collaboration with the industry so as to avoid some of the pitfalls that exist in present regulations, e.g., when you can call a product "low calorie".

3. They feel that since they are not responsible for any increase in primary food consumption, only in secondary (share of the market) they are in no way responsible for overweight, increased cardiovascular disease, etc. and therefore, food advertising should not need to be regulated. (See notes on OMMB; It is possible to increase the secondary consumption of a food that is high in a hazardous nutrient.)

4. On the question of research into impact of information, they claim behaviour is very difficult to change and research can be done to show how information can influence behaviour.

5. They are prepared to compare all statistics on hazardous nutrients with their own data.

6. They suggest that nutrition public information campaigns should not be negative and not stress hazards or risks. Rather, they believe a nutritional campaign should stress positive facts (eating to maintain good health).

7. On labelling they naturally have very strong feelings. They claim that some nutritional labelling is necessary for people with allergies, diabetese , etc., but were adverse to prominent calorie labelling or prominent salt, sugar and fat listings. Again they stressed the importance of Government working with industry on any new labelling requirements. The present incomprehensible

Canadian Grocery Products Manufacturers (Continued)

nutrient listing done voluntarily by the industry in the U.S. and by some in Canada, is held up as an indication of their concern.

It would seem that CCA could get the industry to voluntarily modify some of their ads and even to change the labelling in part, however in the long run, some kind of content labelling and advertising regulations will be needed.

There has been no survey undertaken to my knowledge of the amount and clustering of food advertising on Canadian television. This should be investigated.

Joe Crapa,
Legislative Aide,
Sub-Committee on Domestic Marketing,
Consumer Relations and Nutrition of
the Committee on Agriculture,
U.S., House of Representatives,
Washington, D.C.

Congressman Richmond (Dem.N.T.Y.) is the Chairman of the Sub-Committee which is the House equivalent to the McGovern Committee in the Senate. Richmond is a fairly young, very rich, ambitious Congressman who is getting his headlines by attacking both the industry and the Government on food, content, labelling and advertising on behalf of the consumer.

Hearings began October 1977 and dozens of witnesses have been called. The nutrition education material of all Government departments has been examined by experts. (See appended documents for summary of hearings; analysis of all nutrition education material by Congressional Research; criticism of Government nutrition publications by advertising agencies). During the hearings the most common complaint voiced by consumers and educators was the lack of a highly visible source of objective and consistent nutrition information. Concerns were also raised about nutritional labelling, the amount of certain substances in processed foods, food advertising in general and especially the advertising of heavily sugared cereals and snack foods.

According to Crapa, the consumers did not want to be told what or what not to eat. They wanted to know where ~~do you~~ to go for information presented in a way that they are used to getting information, delivered where they need it, e.g. supermarket, restaurants, doctors' offices. They also wanted to know what the risk factors are in eating certain foods. Nutrition information should also give clear alternatives.

The hearings will reconvene in January and witnesses from the food industry and television networks have already been called. They have been sent a questionnaire regarding sugar, salt and fat in foods and on advertising. The networks will be asked why they schedule so many food ads featuring sugared foods during children's programming.

The Committee has already asked the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture and HEW to re-examine all materials for the public relating to nutrition and food as well as nutrition education. Carol Foreman, Assistant Undersec. of Agriculture has undertaken to design a complete new nutrition education approach (Louise Light, contact at USDA) and to see that grading and labels conform to the new approach. (In the U.S. "choice" meat means a high percentage of fat. It should no longer be called "choice" meat since it is the most hazardous to health.)

The Committee ~~is advising~~ will be recommending that a public information campaign be launched, that is very clear and very visible and based on three points:

1. increase the public's basic knowledge of food;

2. advise on the risk factors of overeating and excess consumption of sugar, salt and fat; and,

3. educate on food choices or alternatives.

As well, according to Crapa, they will probably recommend the lowering of the recommended daily intake of calories and the RDA of nutrients; cut back the amounts of sugar, salt and fats in processed foods; decrease the number of food commercials advertising foods high in sugar, salt and fat. They hope that they will convince the industry to voluntarily revamp their advertising and change the thrust of their commercials to focus on nutrition. They are prepared to go to regulations if the industry is not willing to act voluntarily. However that would be a very long process. Crapa said that they hope that the publicity the hearings receive will generate enough public pressure on the industry to force changes. It may also pressure the Government into a national food policy and the establishment of an effective nutritional advisory council.

Crapa is extremely intelligent and knowledgeable and a valuable contact since he is very open and willing to share their information and experience. It is important to maintain contact with him and monitor further committee hearings. (See appended documents for Richmonds speech outlining goals of the committee and probable recommendations)

Joe Crapa (Continued)

N.B.: Crapa suggested that we contact Albert Heijn of the Netherlands, President of a large chain of supermarkets who has made nutritional labelling and marketing a specialty of his stores. The committee is consulting with him on the feasability of various alternatives in labelling. (See Contact List for Heijn's address)

Dr. Roy John
Prof. of Neurophysiology,
School of Medicine,
New York University,
New York

Dr. John is designing a major UNDP project to test the hypothesis (based on his previous research and using equipment that he has developed) that pre-natal/post-natal nutrition and/or early childhood stimulation affects brain disfunction. Studies have been done and so far are inconclusive on the connection between nutrition and retardation. Brain disfunction is closely allied to educational handicaps and does not signify retardation.

This will be a UNDP regional project and involves Jamaica, Barbados, Guatamala and Cuba with the participation of nutritionists, paediatricians, psychiatrists, psychologists and educators as well as neurophysiologists.

The results of this project could have a major bearing on the establishment of nutritional high risk groups, e.g., pregnant women and infants, and progress should be monitored.

VII. CONTACTS LIST

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